

MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING - THE OCEANS 7 PROCESS IN TONGA

The Tongan Government recognized the important of spatial management, including of its ocean, since 2012, with the launch of their National Spatial Planning Act.

In 2015, for the first time in Tongan history, three Ministries submitted a joint paper to Cabinet to initiate marine spatial planning for the nation (Ministries of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change & Communications (MEIDECC); Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR); and Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries (MAFFF)). Through this paper, on 22 July 2015 Cabinet decided that cross-sectoral planning and coordination for integrated ocean management was needed.

Thus, the Oceans 7 was established (Tonga's marine spatial planning technical working group). The Oceans 7 is co-chaired by the three Ministries that prepared the original cabinet paper and also includes four other Ministries (thus comprising the Oceans "7").

The Ministries are:

- **Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change & Communication**
- **Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (including the Planning and Urban Management Authority)**
- **Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries**
- **Ministry for Finance**
- **Ministry for Internal Affairs**
- **Ministry of Tourism**
- **Ministry of Infrastructure and Tourism (Marine Division) and also the**
- **Tonga Ports Authority and the National Planning and Policy Division, Prime Minister's Office**

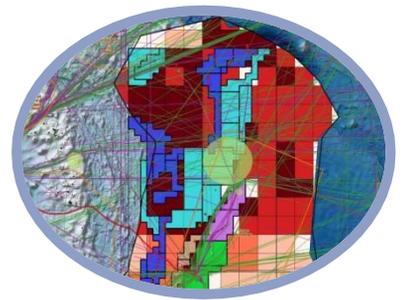
The Oceans 7 has, with the assistance of the Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Management in Pacific Island Countries project (MACBIO) and, more recently, Oceans 5 and Waitt Foundation, already developed the following building blocks for their marine spatial plan including development of a vision and objectives.

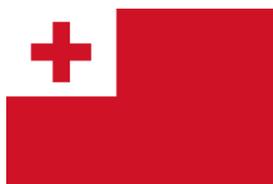
Vision: Ecologically sustainable social and economic development of Tonga's ocean for the benefit of all Tongans

Objectives are to help :

1. Ensure sustainable socio-economic development and use
2. Ensure food security
3. Conserve biodiversity
4. Minimise conflicts between users
5. Build climate change resilience and adaptation
6. Protect and rehabilitate the environment

Next steps include comprehensive national consultations on a marine spatial plan for the country.





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- July 2015:** Cabinet decides (Decision #716) to initiate cross-sectoral, national marine spatial planning for Tonga
- December 2015:** The Ocean 7 (Tonga's marine spatial planning technical working group) has its first meeting and determined: its own terms of reference; the vision and objectives for Tonga's marine spatial plan and a workplan to 2020
- 2015 – 2017:** Collation of over 140 spatial datasets including on environmental, biological, uses and risk variables which were then assessed and prepared for use in marine spatial planning.
- July 2016:** An analysis of 91 instruments to assess the legal basis for marine spatial planning in Tonga is completed
- December 2016:** National marine ecosystem service valuation report is completed
- May 2017:** A typology of ocean management areas for Tonga is defined
- June 2017:** Tonga's UN Ocean Conference Voluntary Commitments includes a marine spatial plan, including a network of 30% marine protected areas by 2020 (#OceanAction 21256 and 21468)
- August 2017:** Report defining 38 biophysically special, unique marine areas of Tonga is launched by the Deputy Prime Minister
- April 2018:** Report on the 25 marine bioregions, that describe all of Tonga's marine environment, launched by the Minister of MEIDECC in the presence of the Minister of MAFF and Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Climate Change and the Environment
- April 2018:** Placement guidelines for ocean management areas approved by Oceans 7
- May 2018:** Marine compliance optimization project begins
- May 2018:** Cabinet decides (Decision #273) to initiate comprehensive consultations upon their intent to build a national marine spatial plan inclusive of a network of 30% marine protected areas



Further reading: www.macbio-pacific.info/tonga